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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 008435

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOF OFFICIALS CONDEMNNS TUENI ASSASSINATION;
DISCUSS NEXT STEPS IN UN

REF: STATE 223709

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: The GoF immediately condemned at the highest levels the assassination of Gebran Tueni and issued strong public statements calling on the international community to redouble efforts to ensure full implementation of relevant UNSCR's, confirming GoF readiness to help the GOL, and paying tribute to Tueni's legacy. Presidential Middle East advisor Dominique Boche stressed to us December 13 that the draft UNSCR to renew UNIIIC should begin to take into account the GOL request to the UNSC to broaden the UNIIIC mandate, without formally enlarging UNIIIC's mandate or calling for an international tribunal. Boche cautioned that asking for too much, too rapidly could engender opposition within the SC and complicate UNIIIC's extension. End summary.

2. (C) We shared USG statements condemning the assassination of Gebran Tueni with MFA and Elysee officials December 12 and 13. President Chirac and FM Douste-Blazy strongly condemned the assassination publicly shortly after it took place. In an emotional condolence letter to Tueni's widow (full text in para 6) made public December 12, Chirac condemned the assassination "with the greatest firmness," declared that he "bowed" before Tueni's memory, and described Tueni as "the incarnation of Lebanon's fight for democracy, independence and liberty." While Chirac's letter did not mention Syria by name, it asserted, "He (Tueni) was a voice which some wanted to silence. It is a liberation process which some want to thwart." The letter also called for redoubling efforts to ensure the full implementation of UNSCR's and confirmed GoF willingness to respond to assistance requests from the GOL.

3. (C) Presidency Middle East/Americas advisor Dominique Boche stressed to us December 13 that the GoF had sought to condemn Tueni's assassination in the most firm terms, without directly accusing Syria in the absence of proof. Boche welcomed news of U.S. demarches to other European and Arab capitals and agreed that further condemnations would be a critical show of support to the Lebanese government and help deter future attacks. While noting that the GoF had not made similar demarches in capitals, Boche stressed that the GoF efforts to secure a PRST condemning the attack had "opened the door" to further UN action.

4. (C) On next steps in the UN, Boche asserted that the draft UNSCR extending UNIIIC's mandate must "begin" to take into account the GOL request to the SC to extend UNIIIC to other assassinations (including Tueni's), without formally broadening UNIIIC's mandate. Boche cautioned against seeking to enlarge UNIIIC's mandate in the rollover resolution, which he speculated could generate opposition from Algeria and Russia among others, and delay the renewal, which must take place rapidly. As an alternative, Boche proposed that the draft resolution should "reinforce" the GoL request to broaden UNIIIC's investigatory mandate, by authorizing UNIIIC to assist the GOL and citing the most recent Mehlis report language on fruitful information exchanges between UNIIIC and the GOL. Boche stressed that it was similarly premature to incorporate the GoL call for an international tribunal in the UNIIIC renewal resolution, and suggested instead that the resolution mandate the SYG to help the GOL determine what types of international judicial assistance it needed.

5. (C) Comment: The Elysee response on the Tueni assassination and next steps in the UN echoes what we heard from working-level MFA officials this morning. While the GoF is being unquestionably firm in its condemnation of Tueni's assassination, French caution on next steps in the UN and the emphasis on maintaining consensus in the UNSC is a consistent policy line. End comment.

6. (U) Text of President Chirac letter to Siham Tueni, December 12, 2005.

Begin text:

Dear Madam,

It is with great sorrow that I learned of the assassination of your husband Gebrane (sic) Tueni and his companions. It is a tragedy for Lebanon. France condemns with the greatest firmness this crime, which provokes horror and indignation.

In his functions as President and Director General of the newspaper An Nahar and in his mandate as member of parliament, Gebrane Tueni incarnated Lebanon's fight for democracy, independence and liberty. It is a voice which some wanted to silence. It is a process which some want to thwart. I bow before the memory of Gebrane Tueni and the other victims who sacrificed their lives, after so many others, for the cause of Lebanon's liberty. In these very sad circumstances, I send you my deepest condolences and assure you of my compassion. So many of these dramas cannot be in vain. Lebanon is not alone. Its friends are mobilized and the international community knows its responsibilities. The death of Gebrane Tueni is the occasion to redouble efforts so that the resolutions of the UN Security Council are fully implemented. French authorities are available to give their assistance and respond to the requests the Lebanese government will introduce. Be sure that I remain alert and determined to achieve these objectives. I convey, Madame, my respectful homage. And my great compassion in the face of the dramatic ordeal.

End text.

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Stapleton